

Thembalami lives up to its name in family's hour of need

A frantic phone call to Thembalami Care Centre from a Western Cape resident who was unable to reach her 70-year-old brother ended with tragedy averted when he was found unresponsive in his home.

In desperation, Sharon Hindle called Thembalami on Sunday, August 9, after repeatedly failing to reach her brother, Hyran Cook, who lives in Lombardy East, Johannesburg. Knowing Thembalami was situated near his home, she hoped staff might be able to help.

She was put through to Sister Kholofelo Mathye. When Sharon explained that her brother had recently undergone hip surgery

and that he lived alone, Kholofelo immediately asked Thembalami's security team to investigate.

Hyran's neighbour, Robbie Carver, was quick to assist when contacted by security and summoned an ambulance when Hyran was found unresponsive in his home. According to Sharon, paramedics said Hyran was in a diabetic coma, and they stabilised him at the scene.

"Sr Kholo needs to be acknowledged for her active listening," says Sharon. "Had she not listened carefully to what I was saying and understood the urgency of the situation, I don't know what would have happened."

"Once Hyran was stable, his amazing neighbour, Robbie, stepped up and kept a watchful eye on him until I arrived," says Sharon.

She flew to Johannesburg and arranged for Hyran to be admitted to Thembalami's recuperative care unit.

Ten days later, on August 21, Hyran was well enough to return home after regaining his strength.



Hyran Cook and Thembalami's Sr Kholo Mathye.

"The TLC he received was amazing," says Sharon. "He has been given a new lease on life."

During his stay, he received physiotherapy to assist with his mobility and, according to Thembalami social worker Lara Swane-pool, he made excellent progress.

"When he went home, he was able to walk with the assistance of a walker. His medication was reviewed, his health was stabilised and he was provided with healthy, nutritious meals to help rebuild his strength."

"He told us that he feels significantly better after his stay at Thembalami," says Lara.

"This story is a wonderful example of how a simple phone call, a caring response and effective teamwork can make an enormous difference. Sister Kholofelo did not hesitate to help a distressed family member, even though Mr Cook was not a resident of Thembalami. Through the quick actions of the nursing and security teams, a potentially tragic situation was identified and emergency assistance was provided in time."

Sharon says Thembalami's nursing services manager, Violet Ngobeni; its deputy manager, Elize Raath; Lara and Kholofelo were amazing.

"Sincere thanks for being so kind and accommodating when I arrived at your door in a panic. It seems that 10 days of care made the world of difference to Hyran, physically and mentally. Thembalami has indeed been 'a place of hope' – fittingly, its name means 'My hope'. As a team, they lived up to their mission statement of 'assist, alleviate, accompany' – all with warm hearts and lovely humour! They showed what true community care looks like."



Rand Aid honours
its long serving
employees

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That's my teacher!
Surprise reunion
at Tarentaal

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Rand Aid honours its long-serving employees

Thirty-five years, countless roles and an enduring commitment to Rand Aid – Ayanda Matthews has seen it all.

The association's general manager of care and human resources, Ayanda was among 69 employees recognised for long service at Rand Aid's awards ceremony on August 26.

Three employees received awards for 25 years of service, two for 20 years, five for 15 years, 38 for 10 years and 20 for five years.

But on a day celebrating long service, Ayanda was the queen. "Ayanda has been at Rand Aid for almost as long as I've been working. Over the years, I've been lucky to work with some incredible people, and looking back, she is easily one of the very best," said CEO Gert Coetzee.

"It's rare to meet someone who can think so clearly and objectively. Ayanda has a natural talent for breaking down any problem – whether it's HR, operational or strategic – and coming up with sharp, thoughtful solutions. You ignore her perspective at your own peril."

"Her drive is extraordinary," said fellow exco member Amanda Diener. "When we insourced all contracted staff between 2015 and 2017, her HR workload effectively doubled overnight. Ayanda didn't hesitate for a second. How she managed it all, only she knows!"

"What I find most touching is where her journey began. Ayanda started her calling as a midwife, bringing new life into the world. Here at Rand Aid, she guides others to care for people through every stage of life, from those fighting addiction to residents in end-of-life care. It is a truly extraordinary spectrum of compassion."



Ayanda Matthews, Rand Aid's general manager of care and human resources, was awarded for 35 years of service.

25-year awards

Three employees were recognised for 25 years of service.

TANYA SWITALA is a familiar face at Elphin Lodge and Ron Smith Care Centre's front office, where she assists residents and visitors and helps advertise village functions. She joined Rand Aid during the construction of Thornhill Manor, working from a prefabricated site office where hard hats were mandatory. She later served as personal assistant to two CEOs, Leon Ghavalas and Rae Brown, and worked at Inyoni Creek and Tarentaal.

JOYCE MABULE joined Rand Aid in 1996 as a domestic reliever at Ron Smith Care Centre and became a permanent staff member in 2001. Since then, she has worked across administration, bookkeeping, HR and time and attendance. Today, known affectionately as 'Tsbinki' in HR, she heads the Workplace Forum.

LAURENTIA JOOSTE began her nursing career in 1979 before returning to her passion for caring for older people. For 25 years at Ron Smith Care Centre, she has cared for residents with advanced dementia, developing a deep understanding of their personalities, preferences and needs.



Joyce Mabule, Tanya Switala and Laurentia Jooste were awarded for 25 years of service.

20- and 15-year awards

WINNIE MAPEKULA, head office receptionist, and **REBECCA NKABI**, SANCA Wedge Gardens cashier, received awards for 20 years of service.

Five employees were recognised for 15 years: Hlumela Anderson, deputy manager of Elphin Lodge; David Rasidumelo, maintenance team member at Ron Smith and Elphin Lodge; security guards Robert Mkawane and Queen Mdewuka; and Thornhill Manor driver and grounds and maintenance assistant Arthur Mlangeni.



20 years of service: Winnie Mapekula (left) and Rebecca Nkabi (right).



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RSCC's Irene Watson turns 105

Irene Watson, a resident of Rand Aid's Ron Smith Care Centre in Lyndhurst, Johannesburg East, celebrated her 105th birthday on September 8 in the company of her daughter, Fiona, fellow residents and staff.

A resident of the care centre for 10 years, Irene has lived through a century of extraordinary change – and her milestone birthday came with a very special surprise: A birthday card from the King and Queen of England!

Born in Darlington, England, Irene worked in the accounts department at Binns Department Store before marrying Reg Watson. The couple had two children, Trevor and Fiona, and emigrated to Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) in 1957, settling in Bulawayo.

In 1982, Irene and Reg moved to South Africa to be closer to their children. They eventually settled at Tarentaal Retirement Village, where they were among the village's first residents.

An avid reader and crossword enthusiast, Irene also enjoyed being a member of the Toastmistress's Club in Kempton Park. She lived independently in her Tarentaal home until 2016, when she moved to Ron Smith Care Centre.



Fiona with her mom, Irene Watson, on her 105th birthday.

Still a team after 60 years of marriage

After 60 years of marriage, Robert (Rocky) and Cynthia Aronowitz are still enjoying a good game – although these days, the court has shrunk considerably.

In their heyday, the couple loved playing tennis. Now residents of Tarentaal Retirement Village, they have swapped the tennis court for the table tennis table, proving that while they may be getting older, they have certainly not put down their rackets.

The couple, who celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary on July 31, first met at the then-Yeoville swimming baths before saying 'I do' at an evening wedding at a Johannesburg restaurant in 1966.

"I walked down the beautiful staircase with its hanging chandeliers," recalls Cynthia.

The couple went on to have two children and three grandchildren, who now live in New South Wales, Australia, and Texas, US. Despite the distance, the Aronowitzes see their family at least once a year and say they remain an important part of their lives.

Their son recently travelled from Texas to take his parents to Sun City for an unforgettable anniversary celebration.

Cynthia worked in the make-up section of a pharmacy, while Rocky was an accountant.

The couple moved to Tarentaal in May 2025, with Cynthia describing the village as their 'safe haven'.

Although she admits it was not easy to adapt to life in a retirement village, they are now beginning to enjoy its many benefits and feel blessed to be part of such a caring community.

Cynthia has also embraced one of her favourite hobbies, jewellery-making. She sells her creations at the village's morning market and nearby flea markets, with Rocky lending a hand by helping to set up her stall.

Asked what has helped their relationship stand the test of time, Cynthia says hard work and perseverance, while Rocky believes it is important for couples to maintain their individual interests.

"Live and let live... don't sweat the small stuff," is Cynthia's advice to younger generations.



Rocky and Cynthia Aronowitz.

Tarentaal resident honoured for decade of knitting for babies

For the past decade, Carla Fasold has knitted blankets and other items to bring warmth and comfort to vulnerable babies.

To acknowledge her tremendous effort over the past decade, Rahima Moosa Mother and Child Hospital recently presented her with a certificate of gratitude.

"You have wrapped our tiniest patients in love," the certificate reads.

Motivated by a desire to help those less fortunate, the Tarentaal retirement village resident spends around five hours a day knitting. She mainly knits blankets, as well as a few jerseys and sensory blankets.

Carla also self-funds the wool, spending around R1 500 every two months.

Her mother taught her to knit and crochet when she was just nine years old.

Carla moved to Tarentaal in 2017. The following year, her son-in-law, who was the specialist in charge of the paediatric unit at the hospital, brought the plight of its tiny patients to her attention. Many of the babies come from disadvantaged backgrounds, and their families need all the help they can get in caring for them.

"Knitting helps to keep my brain stimulated and fends off boredom. But more than that, there is the reward of knowing a baby is going to feel some warmth because of a blanket that I knit."

Being shown around the neonatal unit is a memory Carla says she will never forget. Seeing the tiny babies who would receive her blankets gave even greater meaning to her work and strengthened her determination to continue.

She encourages her fellow Tarentaal residents to consider becoming involved in causes or outreach projects that are meaningful to them.



Carla Fasold with her certificate.

THROUGH THE CAMERA LENS



Residents of Elphin Lodge and other Rand Aid retirement villages enjoyed a taste of France when Elphino's Coffee Shop was transformed into a slice of Paris for a Bastille Day celebration on July 14. Croissants, cheese, jam and coffee were served to the sound of French music and against a French-themed backdrop. Wanda de Groot, who runs the coffee shop, said the event gave residents a chance to experience another country's traditions without travelling. Pictured: Darrel Blake from Tarentaal.



There was something for every appetite at Inyoni Creek's Fun Day on September 19, with pancakes among the treats on offer. Residents and visitors enjoyed a morning of food, entertainment, games and shopping at the Rand Aid retirement village. Pictured: Debby Davies making pancakes.



Thornhill Manor residents enjoyed plenty of laughter and friendly rivalry when the Happy Chatters group held a colourful 'horse race' on July 6. Armed with wooden horses, reins and pool noodles, participants raced to the finish line while cheering each other on. The activity, led by resident and occupational therapist Vicky Keenan, encouraged gentle movement, co-ordination, memory and social interaction. Pictured: residents taking part in the race.



Ron Smith Care Centre residents Charles Power, Irvine Sinnett, Sanele Ndlovu and Ellesen Motloutsi enjoy a Father's Day celebration on June 19. The morning featured lively Bocce ball competition, cold non-alcoholic drinks, snacks and chocolate gifts shaped like tools.



Inyoni Creek residents Ron Bartram and Ernie Muller (village chairperson) enjoy the spring sunshine during a 3km walk through the retirement village grounds on September 1, followed by the planting of a tree to mark National Arbour Week.



Thembalami Care Centre residents and staff enjoy a day of volunteering with DHL on September 18. Led by Cindy Carolus, the team painted flower pots, donated hand-knitted beanies and paint, shared lunch with residents and joined in games of Bingo. Pictured are Tommy Woest, Theunis de Bruin and Cindy Carolus.



Tarentaal resident Penny Warner enjoys some quiet reading time in the village library, where she gets through an impressive average of three books a week. Run by volunteers and stocked through generous donations, the cosy library offers residents a changing selection of books, including large-print titles, as well as puzzles. The library is open on Tuesdays and Fridays from 09:00 to 11:00, with a once-off joining fee of R20.



MODA residents Sean White and Sydney le Sueur enjoy decorated muffins during a joint Father's Day celebration for Thembalami Care Centre and the Max Ordman Deaf Association on June 19. The gathering brought male residents together for conversation, activities and an encouraging talk by Pastor Xolani Nhleko, followed by tea, coffee and treats.

THROUGH THE CAMERA LENS



Ron Smith Care Centre residents Hilary Stern, Vivien Michler and Rea Woolfson take part in the Golden Games, held from August 14 to 21. The week brought six wings together for a lively programme of challenges, including a newspaper footrace, bean-bag knockdown, skyscraper building and the much-loved wheelchair egg-and-spoon race. Each day also ended with a dance competition, with teams performing to Shakira's *Try Everything*. The games combined friendly rivalry, creativity and plenty of laughter, with residents and staff cheering one another on throughout the week. River Lodge 2 delivered a remarkable comeback, going from sixth place in 2025 to claim the 2026 Golden Games championship.



Tarentaal Village resident Elaine Goldberg (front) leads fellow residents through their paces during her weekly line-dancing class at the village hall. The gentle, rhythmic exercise is a fun way to stay active, improve balance and build core strength, while the social atmosphere adds to the enjoyment. Residents can join Elaine every Tuesday from 10:00 to 11:00 for just R20 a class.



Nurse Wendy Mbatha helps Thembalami Care Centre resident Dorah Mapekula take part in a Spring Day celebration on September 1. Residents and staff enjoyed outdoor games adapted for different abilities, including sack races, balance challenges and a ping-pong spoon race, with ice lollies providing a refreshing finish.



Thornhill Manor village manager Shaun Victor works alongside Servest staff Lesley Magaela, Londrick Mathebula and Jeffrey Bodirwato to plant a wild olive tree on September 7, marking Arbour Day. The indigenous tree was generously donated by Servest and will become part of the village landscape, providing shade and shelter for years to come.



Thembalami Care Centre resident Alice Jardim enjoys a morning of bingo, music and gifts during a visit by Grade 7 members of the Johannesburg Mini Council on June 12.



Thembalami Care Centre resident Jacqueline Stringer during a wellness and activity day on May 29. Hosted with Arwyp Medical Centre, the event featured games, health screenings and spa treatments.



Thembalami Care Centre resident Donald Cochrane shares a moment with Tsholo Kekana of Pernod Ricard South Africa during a community volunteer day on June 4. Employees donated recreational items and spent time with residents over games and cake.



Tarentaal Village and Inyoni Creek residents are blessed to have beautiful water-side walks. Perfect for a leisurely stroll or to watch the sun go down, Elphin Lodge residents can also cross the bridge to access these tranquil spots.

52 years later, teacher and pupil reunite as Tarentaal residents

Some reunions take a lifetime to happen. For Theresa Bengis (78), it took 52 years and a retirement village newsletter to bring her back together with a former pupil who had always held a special place in her heart.

Theresa was reading Tarentaal Village's monthly newsletter in September 2024 when she spotted the name 'Michael Chissick'. In 1972, a little boy with the same name had been in the Grade Two class she taught at Cyrildene Primary School in Johannesburg.

Intrigued, Theresa approached Michael (62) and asked which primary school he had attended.

"Cyrildene Primary," he replied.

His face lit up when Theresa told him she had been his Grade Two teacher.

"He said that he thought he recognised me," says Theresa.

The reunion became even more special when Theresa invited Michael to her flat and showed him their Grade Two class photograph. "I then gave him the photo, which I think is one of his prized possessions!"

A pupil she never forgot

For Theresa, seeing Michael again brought back a particularly sweet memory of him as a pupil – and a reminder of why he had always stayed in her thoughts.

One day, when the bell rang for break, all the pupils happily rushed outside. Theresa noticed that Michael had stayed behind.

"I said to him, 'Michael, it's break, you can go out'. He looked around to make sure none of his classmates was there, then came up to me and said, 'Mrs Bengis, I love you, and I want to marry you'.

"As a teacher, some pupils leave a special place in your heart. As you can see, Michael was one of those very special pupils."

Asked what went through his mind when Theresa recognised him as her former pupil, Michael says he was 'amazed'.

He recalls her fondly, explaining that he had to repeat Grade Two and felt uncomfortable being in a younger peer group.

"But she was encouraging and compassionate. She taught me to persevere and be strong," says Michael.

Theresa was 24 and pregnant with her first child when she met Michael. "I became friendly with Michael's mother, Dawn, who was a supportive mom."

At the end of 1972, Theresa decided to leave teaching and become a stay-at-home mother. In 1975, she bumped into Dawn at a shop on Louis Botha Avenue.



Michael Chissick in 1972 (back, second from the right) with his then teacher, Theresa Bengis.



Michael Chissick and his former primary school teacher Theresa Bengis with two old photos from Cyrildene Primary School, taken in 1972 and 1975.

"I was pregnant with my second daughter and Dawn was also pregnant. We were hoping to be at the Marymount Nursing Home at the same time," she says.

A life cut short

Tragically, Dawn died in childbirth. Theresa explains that she had recently returned home from hospital with her newborn when her husband, Bryan, saw her death notice in The Star newspaper.

Michael was just 10 years old at the time.

"Her passing was a shock. I was so saddened as she already had four young children at home," says Theresa.

Now, five decades later, Theresa is once again a reassuring presence in Michael's life.

"She and my next-door neighbour are like surrogate mothers and angels to me," says Michael.

"I am so pleased that Michael and I have become friends," adds Theresa. "He shares many stories of his past. On the odd occasions we go out for coffee, he shares with the staff and customers at the restaurant that I was his Grade Two teacher. I love to see how proud he is!"

Theresa has also encouraged Michael to join the Jewish fellowship she attends, where members meet with students from a local Jewish school.

A TEACHER TO THE END

Theresa probably touched countless other lives during her career as an educator. Although she gave up full-time teaching while her children were young, she eventually started filling in at local schools in Edenvale, where they lived.

"When my husband passed away in 2003, I decided to return to teaching as my daughters were already married and my son was at varsity."

She taught at Edenglen Primary until she turned 60, the retirement age at public schools. She then taught at two private schools until she retired five years ago.

But teaching is clearly in Theresa's blood. She still steps in when substitute educators are needed and gives extra lessons two afternoons a week.

Another treasured memory dates back to when Theresa left Cyrildene Primary School. As a farewell gift, Michael's mother, Dawn, gave her a copy of Dr Spock's book on caring for and raising children.

Dawn wrote a message inside: "I hope that you study this book as hard as Michael had to study maths!"

From hospital-like to home: How Ron Smith Care Centre has transformed

"It is their home, and I am coming to their house."

That simple change in perspective has transformed the way enrolled nurse Laurentia Jooste approaches her work at Rand Aid's Ron Smith Care Centre (RSCC).

Laurentia has worked at the Lyndhurst care centre for 25 years, and she remembers a time when it felt much more like a hospital.

Residents were called patients. Their days followed strict routines and there was little room for individual preferences. Staff focused on the medical side of care, with less opportunity to connect with the person behind the patient.

"It was sterile and impersonal. There was no room for individuals," she recalls.

Today, Laurentia describes RSCC as relaxed and family-like. Staff and residents have developed relationships built on trust, affection, respect and even a healthy amount of banter.

One of the most meaningful changes is that residents are now given space to be themselves, she says.

RIGHTS AND PREFERENCES ARE RESPECTED

The transformation is something general assistants supervisor Portia Ngobeni has also witnessed over more than two decades at RSCC. Portia started at the centre in 2002, aged 19, working through an agency as a cleaner. She became a full-time employee in 2005 and has since worked as a cleaner, housekeeper and supervisor.

"Now, there is a huge difference," she says. In the past, if a resident did not want to bathe at a particular time, they could be made to do so anyway. Today, residents have choices about how they spend their days, from when they shower to what they eat.

"They are empowered. Their right is not stripped away," Portia says.

Enrolled nurse Maropeng Mawasha, who previously worked at a clinic, says that freedom is one of the things she loves most about RSCC.

"They are my boss. I will do what they want," Maropeng says.

Maropeng says she has the time and space to sit with a resident who is unhappy and try to understand the reason behind it. "I can fix the problem through talking, rather than medication or leaving them in misery," she says.

PEOPLE FIRST

RSCC nursing services manager Leanie Bessinger says the purpose of the transformation was always about much more than changing procedures.

"We wanted our residents to feel valued, heard and empowered to make choices about their daily lives," she says.

Just as importantly, the care centre needed to feel like home – a place where relationships flourish and dignity and respect are woven into everyday interactions.

Leanie says one of the most heartwarming changes has been the way relationships between staff and residents have grown and deepened.

In the past, interactions were often centred on the tasks that needed to be completed. Those tasks remain important, but there is now a much stronger focus on the person behind the care needs.

As trust has grown, residents have become more comfortable sharing their thoughts, feelings and wishes.

"There is a warmth and familiarity in many of the interactions that feels more like an extended family than a care facility," she says.

Sometimes, it is the smallest moments that matter most – sharing a cup of tea, celebrating a special occasion, sitting quietly with someone or simply listening.

Leanie says the impact can be seen in residents' mood and emotional well-being, with many appearing more content, engaged and connected.

But perhaps the clearest measure is visible in everyday life. "The smiles, conversations, laughter, friendships and renewed sense of purpose show that well-being is about much more than physical health," Leanie says. "It is about feeling connected, valued and having opportunities to continue living a meaningful life."



General assistants supervisor Portia Ngobeni (left) and enrolled nurse Maropeng Mawasha.



RSCC nursing services manager Leanie Bessinger and enrolled nurse Laurentia Jooste.

A JOURNEY OF TRANSFORMATION

These personal experiences are the result of a deliberate transformation that began more than a decade ago.

RSCC was established in Lyndhurst in 1990. In 2012, it began its Eden Alternative journey, embracing a philosophy designed to address three challenges that can accompany ageing and residential care: Loneliness, helplessness and boredom.

The aim was to move away from an institutional model and create a vibrant, inclusive community where residents could retain a sense of purpose, belonging and control over their lives.

After a four-year process, RSCC achieved Milestone One on the Eden Alternative Registry in late 2016, becoming the first organisation in Gauteng – and the second in Africa – to achieve Eden Alternative Registry membership. The journey continued. In 2020, RSCC became the first organisation in Africa to achieve Milestone 2.

Rand Aid has maintained its commitment to the principles in the years since, with ongoing training and development aimed at ensuring the Eden philosophy forms the basis of The Rand Aid Way across its four retirement villages and two care centres.

GROWING OLDER, *LIVING WELL*

Growing older strategically means making choices that support independence

Growing older is inevitable, but how we approach it can make a significant difference to the quality of those later years, says Rand Aid CEO Gert Coetzee.

Gert believes older people can be more intentional about how they structure their lives, rather than simply allowing retirement to become a period of increasing inactivity and isolation.

"Growing older is something as inevitable as death and taxes," he says. "Fortunately, unlike death and taxes, we have to some extent the ability to structure it in such a way as to get the most from it."

5 areas that can help older people make the most of their later years:

Routine: Retirement village life should not be seen as a perpetual holiday. A regular wake-up time and a few planned activities or chores can give each day structure and provide a reason to get up and get dressed.

Activities: Staying engaged in activities that challenge both the body and mind is important. "The older we get the more the adage of use it or lose it becomes a reality," says Gert.

Socialising: Isolation can happen gradually, without anyone consciously deciding to withdraw from others. Gert says maintaining social connections is vital and points to the Covid-19 pandemic as a stark reminder of the effects prolonged isolation can have on older people.

Sustenance: Appetite can diminish as people become less active, while other age-related challenges may also result in people eating and drinking less. Gert stresses the importance of maintaining adequate fluid intake and balanced nutrition. Where a full meal is no longer appealing, supplements or meal replacements can help.

Independence: Asking for help should not be viewed as a weakness. Gert says recognising limitations and accepting assistance when necessary can actually help people remain independent for longer.

"We all want to be as independent as possible for as long as possible," he says. "The secret to staying independent for as long as possible, I have found, is to view the process as realistically as possible, understand your shortcomings and do not hesitate to ask for help or assistance."

Rather than seeing support as a loss of independence, Gert says, it can be an important part of maintaining a fulfilling life within a community.



Gert Coetzee.



Michaela Goncalves from Julia Wright Biokineticists gets Elphin Lodge residents moving during an interactive talk on incorporating exercise into daily life on September 16.

Spring to it: Small steps can make a big difference

Spring brings warmer weather, longer days and a fresh opportunity for older people to get moving – but becoming more active does not have to mean taking on a demanding exercise programme.

According to biokineticist Julia Wright, the change of season can provide a reset and an opportunity to build more movement into everyday life.

Warmer temperatures can make walking, gardening, swimming and cycling more comfortable and appealing, while exercising outdoors with friends, family or fellow residents can support mental well-being and reduce social isolation.

Regular physical activity can help older people maintain muscle strength, balance, flexibility and endurance – all important for mobility, independence and reducing the risk of falls.

Simple ways to move more

Julia suggests:

- Taking regular short walks around the village, starting with 10–15 minutes and gradually building up.
- Dancing at home or joining a dance or chair class to work on balance, co-ordination and cardiovascular fitness.
- Counting household tasks such as cleaning, cooking, hanging laundry and tidying as useful movement.
- Joining walking clubs, community exercise classes, swimming groups or social sports to combine activity with companionship.
- Doing safe, simple strength exercises with a biokineticist to maintain muscle strength and independence.
- Breaking up long periods of sitting by getting up and walking around for a few minutes every 30–60 minutes.

The benefits extend beyond physical fitness. Regular exercise can improve mood, reduce stress and anxiety, build confidence and provide a sense of achievement as people reach small, realistic goals.

Activities involving co-ordination, balance or learning new movements can also provide mental stimulation, while group activities create opportunities for friendship and can help combat loneliness.

"Regular activity can give structure to the day and provide something enjoyable to look forward to," says Julia.

For residents who have been less active during the colder months, Julia recommends starting slowly and prioritising consistency over intensity. A 10–15-minute walk can be a good starting point, with the duration or frequency gradually increased.

She also recommends combining aerobic activity such as walking with gentle strength, balance and flexibility exercises.

Residents with significant mobility limitations, balance problems or chronic health conditions should consult a biokineticist before substantially increasing their activity.

Julia operates at the following Rand Aid villages:

Inyoni Creek: Monday to Thursday, 07:30–17:00

Elphin: Tuesday and Thursday, 07:30–17:00

Thornhill: Thursday, 12:30–17:00

To find out more or book an appointment, contact Julia Wright Biokineticist at 011 880 4719, WhatsApp 079 834 5665 or email info@jwbio.co.za.

GROWING OLDER, *LIVING WELL***10 ways to prepare for a healthier, happier later life**

Growing older is something everyone hopes to do, but preparing for later life should start long before retirement, says Ulricka Beukman, the manager of Rand Aid's Ron Smith Care Centre.

International Day of Older Persons, celebrated on October 1, provided an opportunity to recognise the contributions of older people, consider the challenges of ageing populations and reflect on how society can better protect their rights. It was also an opportunity for individuals to consider what they can do to build a healthy, happy and secure later life.

"Do not let 'I am too old for that' become your identity," says Ulricka. "In my view, the best preparation for later life is not simply financial planning – it is planning for independence, purpose, relationships and dignity," she says.

But planning for later life should protect your future without sacrificing your present happiness, she cautions. "Do not postpone living until retirement. Travel, spend time with people you love, celebrate occasions and enjoy good food and experiences now."

THE KEY IS TO PLAN AHEAD WHILE YOU STILL HAVE THE FREEDOM TO MAKE YOUR OWN CHOICES.**1 PROTECT YOUR HEALTH & MOBILITY**

Don't wait until you are frail to start thinking about ageing well.
Maintain muscle strength, balance and flexibility.
Keep your weight, BP, cholesterol and blood sugar under control.
Have regular dental, hearing and eyesight checks.
Deal with chronic health problems early.
Keep moving – strength training becomes especially important as you age.
The goal is not necessarily to live to 100, she says, but to have as many healthy, independent years as possible.

2 GET YOUR FINANCES ORGANISED

Know exactly:
What income you will have when you stop working
What you own and what you owe
Your monthly living costs
How much you can afford for healthcare and possible frail care
What would happen financially if one spouse dies first
Do not leave important financial decisions to your children, Ulricka advises.

3 DECIDE WHERE & HOW YOU WANT TO LIVE

Consider:
Will I stay in my current home?
Will I be able to manage the stairs, garden and maintenance when I am 80?
Would I prefer a retirement village?
Do I want independent living with care available nearby?
What happens if I eventually need frail care?
"Make these decisions while you are healthy enough to choose."

4 PUT YOUR LEGAL AFFAIRS IN ORDER

Have a proper plan for:
A valid will and beneficiaries on investments and policies
Power of attorney or mandates where appropriate
Medical wishes and who should make decisions if you cannot
Important documents and passwords being accessible to the right person
Your family should know where important documents are, without necessarily having access to everything.

5 INVEST IN RELATIONSHIPS

"Do not allow your world to shrink to your spouse and children. Loneliness can become a serious health problem in later life."
Build relationships with:
Friends
Neighbours and community groups
Family
People of different generations

6 HAVE A REASON TO GET UP EACH DAY

Retirement can be wonderful, but simply stopping work does not automatically create a fulfilling life. Before retirement, develop things that provide:
Purpose and structure
Something to look forward to
A sense of contribution
"This could include spending time with grandchildren, volunteering, travelling, gardening, caring for animals, sport, learning, mentoring or doing something you've always wanted to."

7 LEARN HOW TO ASK FOR HELP

Ageing well also means accepting that you may eventually need help with:
Transport
Technology
Shopping
Household tasks
Healthcare and personal care
"Needing help does not mean losing your dignity," says Ulricka.

8 TALK OPENLY WITH YOUR CHILDREN

Discuss:
Where you want to live
What kind of care you would accept
Who should help you make decisions
What you would not want
Your wishes around end-of-life care
How involved you want them to be
"Open conversations can help prevent serious conflict later."

9 KEEP LEARNING AND ADAPTING

People who age well tend to remain curious:
Learn new technology
Travel
Read
Meet younger people
Try things you are not good at

10 PREPARE EMOTIONALLY FOR AGEING

Perhaps the hardest part of preparing for later life is accepting that change is inevitable. People will eventually have to face:
Changes to their bodies
The deaths of friends and the loss of some abilities
Changes to their lifestyle
"The aim is not to pretend these things will not happen, but to develop the resilience to recognise that life can remain meaningful, enjoyable and worthwhile even as circumstances change," she says.

COMINGS & GOINGS

Carel joins Rand Aid as central services manager

With experience in retirement living, facilities management, construction and catering, Carel Botha has joined Rand Aid as its new senior central services manager.

He took up the role on June 1 after several years with Flower Foundation Retirement Homes, where he managed a portfolio of retirement villages and, more recently, also served as acting facilities and projects manager.

At Rand Aid, Carel oversees central support functions including maintenance, catering, laundry and health and safety. His role involves helping to ensure that these essential behind-the-scenes services operate efficiently and continue to provide residents with a safe, well-maintained and supportive environment.

Diverse career

His career has given him experience across several areas that are closely connected to his new responsibilities. Before joining Flower Foundation in 2017, he owned a renovations and construction business. Earlier in his career, he spent a decade based at Roedean School, initially managing catering operations through Fedics Food Services before transitioning into facilities and estate management for the school.



Carel Botha, Rand Aid's senior central services manager.

Carel has also continued to develop his management skills through formal study and professional courses. He completed the Gordon Institute of Business Science's management development programme in 2019 and has undertaken training in occupational health and safety management.

This broad operational background has given Carel an appreciation of how the many services within an organisation need to work together.

Many balls to juggle

At Rand Aid, his responsibilities extend across multiple sites and teams. In addition to leading maintenance and refurbishment projects, he oversees central services operations, including catering, laundry and workshop functions, as well as stores, inventory and asset control.

An important part of his role is working with Rand Aid's various stakeholders, service providers and teams to maintain quality standards, while ensuring that resources are used effectively.

Away from work, Carel lives in Brackenhurst, Alberton, and is a father of two. Family is important to him, while his interests include spending time outdoors, hiking and working in the garden. He also enjoys retreating to his home workshop, which he describes as his 'relaxation zone'.

Thornhill Manor says farewell to Joanne

After more than six years of caring for residents at Thornhill Manor, the village's much-loved sister retired at the end of August.

Reflecting on her time at the village, Joanne Bosman says what stood out most was being part of a close-knit and community-focused environment that built meaningful relationships. "Nursing in this environment reinforced that we are all individuals with different personal and medical needs, and that learning never ends," she says.

While retiring from her nursing position, she will not be moving far, having already settled into a cottage in Thornhill Estate nearby.

Her advice to residents for maintaining their well-being is simple: Invest in good nutrition, keep active, spend time outdoors, enjoy time with friends and don't sweat the small stuff.

Looking ahead, she says retirement will not mean slowing down. She plans to spend more time with family and hopes to continue helping others through volunteering or other meaningful activities.



Rand Aid general managers Ayanda Matthews and Amanda Diener with Joanne Bosman (centre) at her retirement party.

Inyoni Creek welcomes smiling Noeleen as its new village sister



Noeleen Wilson is Inyoni Creek's new village sister.

A nurse with 40 years' experience, Noeleen Wilson brings a lifetime of knowledge to her role as Inyoni Creek's new village sister.

The Edenvale resident, who started her new position at the beginning of May, has a simple golden rule for well-being: "Try to laugh at something every day."

She encourages older adults to stay as active as possible, continue learning new things and keep their brains engaged.

Noeleen has experience in both the public and private healthcare sectors, having trained at a government hospital and worked in private hospitals, doctors' consulting rooms, pharmacy clinics and other retirement villages.

She says her strengths include patience and cultural sensitivity, and that she understands the effects ageing has on the body

– something she believes helps her foster empathy in her interactions with residents.

"The village is peaceful and the residents and staff are friendly and helpful," she says of her time so far at Inyoni Creek.

Married for 34 years, Noeleen enjoys needlework, knitting, crocheting, cooking and baking.

She has a married son and says the family enjoys games evenings and attending live performances together.

"My life philosophy is to maintain a balance between work and relaxation, to find pleasure in everything you do and to remember to laugh at yourself."

Noeleen took over from Jana Bezuidenhout, who heads up Rand Aid's Supportive Services division, which offers home-based care to residents.

COMINGS & GOINGS

Puseletso Lephatswa: Bringing holistic OT to Wedge Gardens

How society reacts to people who have made a fresh start after battling addiction can have a huge impact on their chances of long-term recovery.

"People with substance use disorders should be welcomed back into the community, not ostracised. Alienation and stigmatisation lead to loneliness, boredom and, ultimately, relapse. Be present, be there for them, and they will have a greater chance of remaining sober."

This is the view of Puseletso Lephatswa, SANCA Wedge Gardens' newly appointed occupational therapist.

"It takes a lot from a person to realise that they need help and that the path they had taken was not good for them. Therefore, we should be proud of these individuals who decided to take a step towards improving their well-being, as it is not an easy choice to make," she says.

Puseletso joined Wedge Gardens on September 1, bringing with her experience in public health-care, private practice and several rehabilitation settings.

She holds a Bachelor of Science in Occupational Therapy at the University of the Western Cape and a postgraduate diploma in vocational rehabilitation at the University of Pretoria. The qualification strengthened her knowledge of helping people return to work and managing disabilities. This experience is particularly relevant to her role at Wedge Gardens, where she hopes to help residents prepare for life after treatment.

She says Wedge Gardens' holistic approach to treatment fits with her own OT values. The treatment programme considers residents holistically, rather than focusing on one aspect of their lives. This is important because the different aspects of a person's life can influence the activities they take part in and the choices they make.

"No factor is left behind in the care of the clients, from their physical, emotional and mental to their spiritual well-being," she says.

Originally from Qwaqwa in the Free State, Puseletso lives in Germiston with her one-year-old son.



Puseletso Lephatswa, SANCA Wedge Gardens' newly appointed occupational therapist



Eunice Harris and Hlulani Maluleka at THORNHILL MANOR'S ANNUAL DEMENTIA AWARENESS WALK on September 14. Wearing purple, residents, loved ones and staff from Thornhill Manor, Thembalami Care Centre and MODA walked together to raise awareness of early dementia diagnosis and show support for people living with dementia.



Visitors to Thornhill Manor are greeted by receptionist Mapule Talane, who officially took up her position on February 1 after previously working as a casual reliever in several roles across Rand Aid. A married mother of three from Thembisa, Mapule says working with older residents has given her a renewed sense of purpose and a deeper appreciation for life. She has been particularly inspired by the independence and resilience of residents in their 80s and beyond, and hopes to expand her knowledge to better support those living with challenges such as Alzheimer's disease and dementia.



Thembalami Care Centre deputy manager Elize Raath and manager Esme van der Walt receive 34 colourful handmade quilts from The Ripper Ladies on June 24. Quilters Lorna Briangton, Avis Middleton and Sue Leonard far exceeded the club's original plan to donate eight quilts, creating a vibrant gift that will brighten residents' rooms.

MANDELA DAY

RSCC residents bake up kindness for fellow seniors

The true meaning of Mandela Day came to life when residents, families and staff from Ron Smith Care Centre (RSCC) and Elphin Lodge joined forces to support fellow seniors in need.

The initiative saw the Rand Aid communities partner with Serenity Senior Services, a non-profit organisation dedicated to improving the lives of older persons through compassionate care and community support.

Throughout July, RSCC families and Elphin Lodge residents donated non-perishable food items and toiletries for older persons living at the Presidentia municipal housing complex in Springs. The generosity resulted in an overwhelming response, providing much-needed support and is forgotten.



Mirriam Benjamin, Evelyn Shilubane and Noeline Aspeling with the biscuits that were lovingly baked.

The kindness continued on July 14, when RSCC residents baked more than 300 oat-and-raisin biscuits to share with the Presidentia residents. Each biscuit was carefully packaged with a heartfelt message: "May today remind you that you are loved, valued and never forgotten. Your smile, your strength, and your presence make a difference. Thank you for being you."

A few days later, the biscuits were hand delivered to the residents.

"Mandela Day reminds us of the importance of giving our time and showing compassion to others," said Simoné Botha, RSCC manager of occupational therapy and recreation. "The generosity of our residents, families and staff demonstrated the power of connection and reminded us that we are all enriched when we care for one another."

Inyoni Creek sets personal best with 6 304 squares

Residents of Inyoni Creek Retirement Village have once again proved that every stitch can make a difference, setting a new village record by donating 6 304 knitted and crocheted squares to be turned into warm blankets for vulnerable South Africans this winter.

The initiative forms part of the village's annual Mandela Day project.

The colourful squares were officially handed over during a gathering at the village clubhouse on July 14. Residents were thanked for their community spirit and dedication, while guests enjoyed soup and rolls to celebrate the achievement.

Among those attending was Malcolm Burroughs, a 67 Blankets ambassador, who accepted the donation on behalf of the organisation.

The squares will be sewn together into blankets and distributed to vulnerable communities through the 67 Blankets for Nelson Mandela Day campaign.



Thornhill Manor residents donated warm winter items as part of the village's Mandela Day drive. Residents exceeded their target of 67 beanies and scarves, with additional items purchased through a fund-raising donation from resident Vicky Keenan and her team. The donations were given to Sasonah Lodge in Germiston and Compass in Edenvale. Pictured are Thornhill Manor social worker Karen Griessel with Fiona Pickett of Compass, and the organisation's penguin mascot wearing one of the donated beanies.

A week of blessings for care centre

Mandela Day brought a week of kindness to Thembalami Care Centre and MODA.

Sheer Bliss, led by Sandra Freire, treated residents and staff to relaxing massages, while the Adreach team, led by Kim Willoughby, joined residents for Bingo, Tumbling Tower, Snakes and Ladders, Rummikub and chess, and donated cakes, snacks, blankets, beanies and socks for a shared tea.

About 30 Ivanhoe Mines employees painted three bedrooms and a TV lounge and donated the remaining paint and equipment. "They enjoyed every minute of it," says Thembalami deputy manager Elize Raath. "Some arrived dressed in their smart work clothes but left covered in paint, with huge smiles on their faces."

Pick n Pay Greenstone followed with cakes, refreshments and essential groceries, including maize meal, rice, cooking oil, baked beans, coffee, tea, sugar and milk.



Thembalami manager Esme van der Walt with Stuart Brown, wearing his new beanie.